



Urban Mission Ministries, Inc.

# BRIGHT HORIZONS

Rev. Bruce Hitchcock, Executive Director

Angie Brown, Newsletter Editor

December 2004

**Inside this issue:**

Christmas at Urban Mission	2
Thanksgiving Update	2
Calling All Churches	3
Parish Nurse News	3
UMM Calendar	4

## "The Ultimate Gift"

The Christian Christmas Story is one of the most romanticized and misunderstood stories in the Bible. Chances are good that you are ready to put this article down right now! Nobody wants the good warm feelings of the holiday season to be washed away! I promise to write about only the things we can clearly see in the biblical story itself.

They are traveling at precisely the wrong time. And the worst of all possibilities occurs. With God's grace Mary safely delivers a son. The delivery takes place not at a hospital, not at a clinic, or even a home, but in a stable/barn. Stables and barns stink. They are dirty and unsanitary in the extreme. It was not possible to find decent health care.

Mary and Joseph were vulnerable people who had to travel dangerous roads to a strange place in order to be counted in a census. The purpose of the census was to insure that the proper amount of taxes were being paid to corrupt Jewish officials and the proper amount of tribute was paid to Roman and pagan rulers. This mass movement of people made it easy for thieves to operate, rulers to cause malcontents to disappear, and people to gouge others due to the chaos. Foreign soldiers offered the threat of violence on the roads and in the towns.

Think of the conditions that Mary and Joseph endured. Social chaos, high taxes, corrupt government, foreign powers offer violence, family and friends gossiping, faith losing it's place in society, gouging, no doctors, nurses, or facilities, danger, and most deadly of all, no compassion for two people in tremendous need. Yet...God acted through it all to do something miraculous for all the people of the world. God gave us Jesus. This act is still the defining act of love and gift giving in the world today! This gift is still being given by God to the world today. And the conditions that Mary and Joseph endured still thrive all over the world today. Most people did not notice back then and most people still do not notice today. Today we know more about how the retailers are doing this holiday season than we know about God's love and compassion for us and others.

Added to this social mess there were questions of trust and impropriety in the minds and hearts of Mary and Joseph. Mary is pregnant. Joseph, the betrothed, is not the father! Yet, the two of them are going ahead with the relationship as if nothing has happened. Joseph and Mary know of God's involvement and the faith choice they have made, but can you imagine the family gossip and the nosy neighbor comments? Would you believe a spouse who came to you obviously involved, and the only explanation is, "God?" Mary and Joseph were extraordinary in their faith in God and one another.

In the face of all that goes on in our world God's gift of Jesus Christ still triumphs. Don't use this time to focus on Jesus by ignoring social conditions today. Instead, focus upon Jesus with all your heart and mind. And then ask the Incarnate Baby King what we should do to meet the needs of our neighbors.

The health care situation was appalling.

*-Love, Pastor Bruce*

**Seasons Greeting your friends at Urban Mission:**

*Bruce Hitchcock*

*Greta Bigsby*

*Angie Brown*

*Debra Bryan*

*Sandra Chandler*

*Shannan Farmer*

*Toni Hubbard*

*Sharon Kirtdoll*

*Kitty Lancaster*

*William Leonard*

*Heather Macre*

*John Murray*

*Robert Payton*

*Jim Sloane*

*Linda Smith*

*Ann Tyrell*

*Ralph Washington*

**Happy Holiday's from our family to yours!**

# CHRISTMAS AT URBAN MISSION



## Christmas Kids Program

Christmas is quickly approaching and we need your help to make it a joyous season for the children of the upper Ohio Valley. We have **650 children** signed up for our **Christmas Kid's Program**. This is an increase of approximately 150 children from last year! We need your help to provide Christmas gifts for low-income children, ages 12 and under. Very often these gifts are the only ones left under the tree at Christmas. If you haven't yet adopted a child, please call Linda at 740-282-2911 and help us with this program. All gifts should be returned to the Urban Mission by **Monday, December 10, 2004**.



## Mitten Tree



Our mitten tree is filling up with socks, underwear, hats, scarves, gloves and mittens for children and adults. Can you help us provide these items for our neighbors in need? Donations of these items can be brought to the Mission by **Monday, December 10, 2004**.

## Christmas Distributions

Christmas Kid's, Teen Stockings and Mitten Tree items will be distributed at Urban Mission on **Thursday and Friday, December 16 & 17, 2004**.

## Operation Christmas Stocking!

Our Christmas Stocking program is off and running! We still need your help. This project involves filling a Christmas stocking (holiday gift bags work wonderfully also!) with toiletries for a teen female or male. The stockings (approximately 200-250) will then be presented to teens 13-18 years of age just before Christmas.

Items that can be included in the stockings are...**soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, comb/brush, shampoo, conditioner, cologne/aftershave, talc powder, lipstick/compact, hair spray, hair combs, barrettes, nail polish, cotton balls, Q-tips, jewelry, blank cassette tapes, restaurant gift certificates (McDonalds, Burger King, etc.)**. Please have the stockings back to Urban Mission by **Tuesday, December 7, 2004**.

## Hutton House Christmas

In a few weeks Christmas Day will be here! The Hutton House apartments have all been decorated for our families to enjoy. The children are all talking about what they want for Christmas and parent's are often left with the task of explaining why "Santa" can't bring them everything they want.

The Holiday season can be very stressful for low income and homeless families. It is often very difficult to meet everyday needs, let alone trying to make sure there are gifts under the tree at Christmas. As I assure the parent's that there will be something for the children on Christmas morning, I also ask them what they would like. The usual answer is "Nothing . . . just something for my kids."

Would you like to help Christmas happen at the Shelter? You could buy a gift for a child, teen or adult, or donate items to make our apartments a "home" (linens, sofa beds, cleaning supplies, 2005 calendars, wrapping paper, refrigerators, curtains, etc.) If you would like to become involved, please call Debra at 740-282-8903 and help us bring Holiday cheer to the hearts of those in need.



## Santa's Recycle Shop

Each year we have several families who do not make the deadline for getting their children registered in our Christmas Kids Program. In order to help these families have toys for their children, we will have "Santa's Recycle Shop" on **December 21 and 22 from 9:00 - 12:00 and 1:00 - 3:00**.

If you have any used toys, games, etc. please consider donating them for this program. We ask that these items be in very good condition (toys in good working order, puzzles without missing pieces, books not colored or written in, etc.). If it is possible for you to help provide items for this program, please deliver them to the warehouse located at 311 North 6<sup>th</sup> Street in Steubenville, OH by **Friday, December 17, 2004**.

We are also in need of volunteers to help during the Holiday's. If you would like to help or need further information, please give Linda a call at 740-282-2911.

## THANKSGIVING UPDATE

We have reached our goal to provide 1,300 families with all the fixings for Thanksgiving Dinner! It would have been impossible to have done this without your help. Thank you to the individuals, groups, churches and schools who took part in raising funds to help meet the need. We are grateful for each of you.

We also thank those of you who took part in this year's Thanksgiving Challenge in collecting different food items during the past several months. Each item donated, both funds and food, helped us reach our goal. Thank you again and may God bless each of you abundantly!

## CALLING ALL CHURCHES



As we come to the end of another year, we think back on all of the wonderful memories this year has provided. Some of those memories have been our Mission Rejoice services. There were a lot of churches that were a part of those precious memories and the time has come to make new memories. Would you like to be a part of this very special ministry?

For those not familiar with Mission Rejoice, it is a service held on Saturday evenings. A host church will come and preach and prepare a meal for after the service. Sometimes a church chooses to do only one of those. This is a community effort for all denominations to come and minister to the poor and homeless in our valley. This is a place where many have given their lives to Christ and where the hopeless can find hope.

We very much want all of the local churches involved. We are now scheduling for the 2005 Calendar year. Please consider making this an annual event for you and your church. Perhaps you would like to have your youth group or Sunday School class come and prepare and serve the meal. All are welcome. We have been very blessed by those who have come in the past and shared with us. If you would like to be a part of this awesome ministry, give me a call at 282-8010. Don't miss your chance to touch someone else's life with the love of Christ.

*-Rev. Toni Hubbard, Mission Pastor*

## A PLANT LOVER NEEDED!



We are in need of a volunteer who loves to care for plants. We need someone who will come in and take care of our plants. Please give Sharon a call at 740-282-8010 if this is something you are willing to do.

## HEALTHY BINGO


**Healthy Bingo  
Unity Kitchen  
Wednesday, December 8, 2004  
1:00 p.m.**



Healthy Bingo is a game designed to teach cancer education in a non-traditional way. Members of the cancer coalition will give health information between the bingo games and participants will have opportunities to win health and personal hygiene products. All are welcome.

*Sponsored by Women in Action Against Cancer  
Co-chairpersons: Mary McElhaney & Sharon Kirtdoll*

## CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

 On Saturday, December 18, 2004 at 6:00 p.m., our Mission Rejoice families will be treated to a very special candlelight worship service. This will be a night full of worship, music, joy and fellowship as we celebrate the true meaning of Christmas – the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

## PARISH NURSE NEWS: PROTECT YOURSELF FROM THE FLU

There is a shortage of flu vaccine for the beginning of flu season this year. Because the vaccine cannot be given to all persons who may be exposed to the flu, people must practice measures to protect themselves from the flu. Here are some ways that you can protect yourself from catching the flu.

The flu is spread by droplets, which are those little drops of moisture that come out when people cough or sneeze. The viruses that cause the flu can be spread by breathing in the droplets or may be spread by touching objects that are contaminated with the droplets. If you touch a contaminated object and then rub your eyes or nose, you can infect yourself. Remember to catch all your coughs and sneezes in disposable tissues and wash your hands after you dispose of the tissues.

Here are some tips to help you stay healthy during the winter months. Remember to get enough sleep and rest.



Eat well-balanced meals, which contain fruits and vegetables. Drink plenty of fluids including water. Wash your hands frequently, especially if you have been around someone who has been coughing or sneezing. If you are not close to a sink, you can use an antibacterial hand wash or towelettes to clean your hands. Then wash your hands as soon as you can. If you feel that you are getting sick, stay home and take care of yourself. Get plenty of rest and drink lots of fluids. Contact your doctor or another health care professional for treatments. Do not take any medications (including herbal remedies) without first checking with a health care professional.

The supply of flu vaccine may increase before the flu season is over. You may still be able to get a flu shot, but in the meantime, take precautions to keep from getting the flu.

*-Michalene A. King, RN, MSED, MSN*

**DECEMBER 2004**  
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

LABEL

**Upcoming Events in December 2004**

1	Program/Evaluation Committee Meeting	2:00 PM
4	Mission Rejoice	6:00 PM
6	Parish Nurse	11:00 AM
7	Hunger Committee Meeting	10:00 AM
8	Healthy Bingo (Unity Kitchen) NCDC Meeting (Urban Mission)	1:00 PM 4:30 PM
9	God's Pantry-West Virginia Food Distribution	9-12
11	Mission Rejoice	6:00 PM
13	Parish Nurse	11:00 AM
14	Finance Committee Meeting	6:00 PM
16	God's Pantry-Ohio Food Distribution	9-12;1-3
16 & 17	Toy Distribution, Mitten Tree & Teen Stockings	9-12;1-3
18	Lupus Support Group Meeting (Trinity East)	11:00 AM
18	Mission Rejoice Candlelight Service	6:00 PM
20	Parish Nurse	11:00 AM
21 & 22	Santa's Recycle Shop (Warehouse)	9-12;1-3
23-31	Mission Closed for Holiday's	Closed
<i>Season's Greetings and Happy Holiday's!</i>		



**Holiday Schedule**

Urban Mission will be closed **December 23, 2004 - December 31, 2004** to allow our employees to spend time with their families. The Mission will reopen on **Monday, January 3, 2005** for regular business hours. There will be no Mission Rejoice on December 25 or January 1. Services will begin again on January 8, 2005.

*Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!*